

# **COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS**

## **British Caving Association**

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### **Reports for 13<sup>th</sup> October 2018 Committee Meeting**

#### **Chairman's Report**

Another busy summer with lots of CNCC activity which you will find in the Officer reports. I attended a CNCC sponsored SRT Training Course in the July heatwave. This was ideal for those of us who have been avoiding some caves because it has been so long since we last did serious SRT. Confidence is quickly restored with this type of refresher training from CIC qualified trainers. Watch out for the next training courses which will be advertised on the CNCC website and UKCaving.com.

Plans are developing for the joint field meeting with CNCC – North Pennines UNESCO Geopark and BCRA. The date for this event looking at Northern Pennine Maze Caves will be on the weekend of 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019. Put this in your diary now.

There may be a misconception that CNCC Committee meetings are for the club reps and “experts” of caving with decades of experience to hold forth on all matters caving. The reality is that we want to hear the views of anyone with an interest in the future of northern caving. We want to be able to draw upon the expertise of individuals active within all the disciplines of caving - sport caving, expedition caving, surveying and drawing, archaeology, speleobiology and conservation etc. I would like to encourage anyone with caving experience to come along to a CNCC meeting and see what goes on.

The Stories in Stone Cave Conservation Project has a new project leader – Kay Easton. The project will continue for another 14 months. More cave conservation projects will be undertaken in the next few weeks. There are plans to invest in some new equipment funded by SIS.

**Andrew Hinde – CNCC Chairman**

## Secretary's Report

Firstly, thank you to Kay Easton for taking the minutes of the last meeting; a splendid job!

Since the last meeting I have put together the August newsletter... an absolute bumper issue (8 pages rather than the usual 4). Many thanks to all of those who contributed articles. There will be another newsletter in March so please start sending me content now.

A few new cave descriptions have been added to the CNCC website, for Sunset and Roaring Hole. One for Robinson's Pot has been submitted and awaits peer review. The Lost Johns'/Boxhead description has been extensively updated too.

The CNCC's GDPR advice, approved at the last Committee meeting, has been uploaded to our website (publications page) and a news article posted to promote this.

In August (with approval from Tim) I transitioned permit issuing for Leck Fell to Geoff Whittaker. This means that we are well placed to move Leck Fell onto the online cave booking system (for which Geoff is the administrator) as soon as Tim achieves permission.

More recently, permit issuing for Casterton Fell has also moved over to Geoff, as Hannah will be unavailable for several months. Geoff is now the single point of contact for all permits across Leck, Casterton and Ingleborough Estate. My thanks to Geoff for his dedication and Hannah for looking after Casterton permits for the last three years.

A few weeks ago, I contacted all Committee clubs regarding a proposal from the CNCC to the BCA regarding some changes to what BCA funds can be used for; in particular, this proposal would see funding become available for our newsletter, our website and initiatives to promote caving. The full proposal is included as a supplementary document to this meeting. This is a proposal put together initially by Tim (as our CNCC-BCA rep) but further developed with input from myself, Andrew and Kay. In my email, I asked for Committee feedback on this, and received supportive responses from eight clubs (ULSA, Earby, Grampian, NPC, Bradford, Kendal, Boggarts, White Rose). With a majority support we allowed this proposal to be put before the 6<sup>th</sup> October BCA meeting. Tim will report on the outcome. Thank you to those clubs for being able to consider this matter so quickly; we were keen that this didn't have to wait until the January BCA meeting.

The NECAFE award for exploration still sits (undeservedly) in my house; This is up for some discussion at the meeting, but my feeling is that we may have hit a dead end on this one.

The online cave booking system has completed the testing phase, permission to 'go live' is in place, and our webmaster, Gary, has been working several hours a week with some last-minute changes, refinements and tweaks, more details in his report.

I am concerned by the current situation within the BCA; one which has seen Nick Williams resign as acting Secretary for health reasons. Nick's contribution to the BCA (since it's formation I think) has been nothing short of outstanding. We can discuss more at the meeting.

After many years of talking about it, you have my assurance that 2019 will see the CNCC making an active appearance at Hidden Earth (wherever it may be). I have already started work to design the display, and Gary and I will be continuing this over the next several months. Hopefully some draft text will be available to discuss at a meeting next year. This is likely to require some hefty investment from the CNCC (mostly one-off costs to purchase banners, display boards) which may exceed the £500 cap that Pete can authorise. It would be good to get confirmation of whether the Committee are happy with a larger spend if necessary. At present this would probably have to come from CNCC funds without being reclaimable from the BCA budget heads.

The display boards and banners themselves are going to need to be stored somewhere, ideally in The Dales, and accessible by anyone wanting to use them; Are any clubs with huts willing to offer a small corner of their storage areas for this?

Finally, I'd like to remind all Committee that if you wish to reapply for the CNCC Committee in 2019, or an Officer position, to send me an email to notify me of this (statement optional). The deadline is 12th January, but please do not leave this until last minute.... It really doesn't take long! Remember that this year saw more applicants than there were places on the Committee!

**Matt Ewles – CNCC Secretary**

## Treasurer's Report

### **Financial Status as of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2018:**

Business Community Account: £2984.97

Business Saver Account: £14524.94

Since the June meeting, the following payments/receipts made:

£30.00 paid to the Hellifield Institute for the hire of the meeting hall.

All cheques covering travel expenses for Foul Pot work have been cashed.

BCA Grant to Regional Councils, for the CNCC 2017 (£480.90) has now been received.

Re: Anchor Replacement Project claim for £3900 - now Council approved and full payment to be made by the end of this week.

The cheque for the copies of Caves and Karst has now banked.

Mileage payments have been made to CPC & BCP for GG track repair.

Payment of £225.23 made to Andrew Hinde for the purchase of lintels for dig capping on the Ingleborough Estate – this sum to be reclaimed back from the SIS project.

Payment to G Douthwaite re newsletter postage costs (£13.90) and anchor resin (£27.28).

Payment to Inprint for newsletter printing (£100).

Payment to P Bann (£29.55) for postage costs.

**Pete Bann – CNCC Treasurer**

## Conservation Officer's Report

No report provided

## Access Officer's Report

Greeting to all northern cavers and visitors. I hope to see some of you at our meeting on Saturday. My report is mostly informative although there are one or two items I need the committee's view on.

### **Online booking system.**

Following a successful trial period over the summer the Ingleborough Estate agreed to move completely over to the online system as soon as we are ready. That process is underway and led by Gary and Geoff. The new system is open to all who register and will see an end to the paper permit systems of the past. The flexibility the system offers will suit visiting cavers particularly who can change destination to suit their trip needs with much greater ease. Once fully established I hope we can extend the system to Leck and Casterton.

### **Langcliffe Hall Estate.**

Matters have moved on since my previous report towards setting new arrangements in place for this part of Penyghent. We are still to finalise one small detail but I expect the new arrangement to accept open access to the caves located on access land. We are just finalising a simple memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the caves located on private land. This deals with landowner indemnity, fixed aids, safety alerts, and countryside and cave conservation codes. One point to clarify; I am expecting to sign the MoU on behalf of CNCC. I will, of course, seek approval from fellow Officers but do the Committee need to ratify also?

### **Barbondale caves.**

I was informed that there have been problems with the gamekeeper refusing access to the area around Barking Gill and Crystal Cave. The matter is somewhat complicated as it revolves around a shooting syndicate, access land, gorge scrambling, outdoor centre use and recreational cavers. The sensitive time for shooting is during September and October and especially on a Wed/Thursday. I have spoken to the land agent and others and expect to hold a meeting on site in November to thrash out a solution for cavers.

### **Kingsdale.**

On a courtesy visit to Braida Garth Farm, I picked up vibes that all was not well with access at Keld Head. The new farmers wanted divers to use a different route to that which had been established over many years and it was causing a little friction. CDG were informed and took action including a small gift. Increased attention at the site due to the fine weather over spring/summer probably did not help but all appears to be sorted now. As a further good will gesture I removed the considerable mess (large tent, mattresses, pillows, empty Pringle containers and more unpleasant items etc) left by 'wild campers' at Keld Head. Many thanks to Jon Beaven for his assistance.

### **Interpretation board.**

After two years of delicate negotiations with the landowner we now have the go ahead for a National Park interpretation board on the three counties system to be located at Bull Pot Farm. I am very pleased with this outcome and the board is 'in production'. Once I have recovered, I hope to have a further board located at the other end of the system around the Turbary road which should be much easier to organise.

### **National Park.**

The new head of access and engagement (taking over from Mark Allum) is Rebecca Greenfield. I have spoken with Rebecca by phone with a brief introduction about caving matters in the NP. I hope to have a meeting with her over the winter to discuss issues and ideas. I'm pleased to report that I shall be giving a talk on caving to NP staff at the end of November.

### **Caves & Karst books.**

Most of the Caves & Karst books we purchased have either been given out or are allocated to landowners. I think I have one left. The cost of these was paid for from a donation given to CNCC by an anonymous benefactor. There is further money to spend from this donation which was requested to be spent on good PR type initiatives. We need to come up with specific ideas to cover the value of the rest of the donation.

Also on **the PR side** of things I was asked by the BBC to come up with suggestions for an 'underground' item for the Paul Rose series on Wensleydale, Swaledale and Wharfedale. In the end they chose to do a piece on laser scanning the winding machinery in the Sir Francis Level at Gunnerside. Filming has been completed and I guess the shows are due out in the autumn.

As last year, I am programming the Underground Session at the **Kendal Mountain Festival**. This is on the Friday night, 16<sup>th</sup> November. We have three speakers for the three hour session which includes a bar break. Speakers are Christine Grosart, Imogen Furlong and Jason Mallinson. Tickets are now on sale via the Festival web site. Please let your club members know via your social media outlets. I should state that my involvement with the festival is as a volunteer and my aim is to better promote caving amongst outdoor folk and improve our image more generally. Persistence seems to be paying off (with perhaps a little help from the Thai rescue publicity) as part of the promotion of the festival this year will involve a piece on caving. If it all works out this should be a major item on mainstream telly – watch this space!

I am much more familiar with the popular caving areas of the western 'Yorkshire' Dales than anywhere else in the north. I don't get to hear of many problems from other CNCC regions, such as the eastern moors or Scotland which we also represent. I am happy to help out with any access problems if I can but I shall be relying on the knowledge and support of local cavers or those more familiar with the area in order to do so. Don't be afraid to ask.

**Tim Allen – CNCC Access Officer**

## Training Officer's Report

There has been a recent flurry of activity with the BCA Training Committee (TC). After a split last year between the professional and recreational sectors, the BCA Training Committee (now representing recreational caving) is moving forward on various plans. The BCA Training Officer's (TO's) report has been uploaded to the CNCC website meetings page as a supplement to this report.

Included in this are two points I'd like to discuss with the Committee and then feed back to the BCA TC. These are:

- 1) What kinds of training do northern cavers feel should be funded by BCA training grants (see p. 1 of the BCA TO's Report)?

Currently, most of these training grants go towards funding SRT workshops. There is some disagreement over whether these should also fund first aid training and/ or other kinds of training.

I highlighted the need for first aid and health and safety training for conservation projects in the north at the most recent TC meeting. The Training Committee is mostly concerned that they could be funding certificates for people who don't need them, and non-certified training would be more appropriate.

When I explained the necessity of certification for conservation work, the BCA Training Officer agreed that it was important to assist in funding these qualifications, and to help maintain good relations with the other funders of these projects, as well as landowners. He suggested an alternative funding structure might be developed for these projects. This is obviously something I will continue to push for with the BCA TC.

What I would like to know from the Committee is:

- a) Are there any similar situations where funding a particular kind of training is required?
  - b) Should I continue to push for BCA funding for training which falls outside of these areas?
- 2) What stance should I take on the BCA coaching guidelines (see p. 1 of the BCA TO's Report)?

The BCA TC is developing coaching guidelines for club training of cavers. This is an opt-in scheme which offers coaching guidelines at 3 levels of proficiency. The hope is that this will improve the standards of SRT training and offer a "gold standard" of techniques to use and teach.

As this is an opt-in scheme, we can choose whether or not to subscribe to these as a caving body, or even at a club level. I have been unable to see the actual details of the guidelines and the levels of proficiency.

Whilst raising standards for SRT skills is a positive step, some people have expressed concern that this may have unintended consequences. Once the scheme becomes established and wide spread then club cavers will be expected to take part. Clubs may decide that in order to lead a trip the leader must have attended a course. Attendance may lead to a form of qualification and that can give others a measure of competence. Organisations that look for a way to measure these things, such as insurers and those who manage or own land, may see these guidelines and levels of proficiency as measures of competence and begin to use them in their arrangements.

Additionally, it has been pointed out that this scheme is being driven by elements of the instructed caver community and that being paid for running these courses will benefit them. I would like to get some feedback from the committee that I can take back to the BCA TC, including:

- a) What aspects of this do we support and what aspects concern us (and why)?
- b) Is there a way that we could adapt these guidelines that makes them more suitable for northern caving, given the access situation and any other concerns raised?
- c) Should I produce a position statement for the BCA TC and/ or northern cavers on where the CNCC stands regarding this scheme? If so, what kind of points should I include?

It is also worth mentioning that the BCA TO has organised another SRT training session with the Craven Pothole Club. This is not part of the coaching scheme and will be run by a CIC (not sure who yet). This is officially a BCA training workshop, not one of ours, but it is part of a new initiative where a host club will get funding for SRT training with a CIC and an agreed number of places will be reserved for their members, whilst the rest will be open to any BCA cavers from across the UK.

**Maz Holloway – CNCC Training Officer**

## Webmaster's Report

**Google Analytics** – page views for (per week) from 1 Oct 2017 to 30 Sep 2018.  
(Note spike in April 2018 due to April Fool news article)



**Google Analytics** – page views for (per month) from 1 Oct 2017 to 30 Sep 2018.



Total page views in the: Last 12 months: 86,491  
Previous 12 months: 63,785  
= 35% increase.

Oct 17	Nov 17	Dec 17	Jan 18	Feb 18	Mar 18	Apr 18	May 18	Jun 18	Jul 18	Aug 18	Sep 18
6679	7610	5224	7333	7882	6322	8254	5334	8381	8940	7682	6850
+51%	+51%	-88%	+8%	+23%	+33%	+45%	+16%	+27%	+51%	+19%	+39%

% is increase on same period in the previous year.

Note; December 2016 was the launch of the new-look CNCC website with topos and descriptions; hence high traffic in December 2016 meaning December 2017 couldn't compare.

### **Facebook**

As of 9 Oct 2018 we have 681 page likes and 707 followers.

In the last 28 days:

- 12 new page likes
- 13 new followers
- Posts have reached 1547 people with a post engagement of 520

### **Twitter**

As at 9 October 2018 we have 339 followers.

### **Online Booking System**

Following successful beta testing, the system is now ready to be made live. Final preparations have been ongoing to move it to its permanent location and tidy up loose ends before it is made public. Following feedback, the registration and password reset part has been re-coded to make it simpler and more secure. I expect it to be live and public in the next few weeks.

**Gary Douthwaite – CNCC Webmaster**

### **Anchor Coordinator and E&T Representative**

Several installation projects are in progress. New topos for Roaring Hole and Marble Sink are now on the CNCC website. Jockey Hole has been completed and a topo produced.

There are 7 IC anchors in Jockey Hole and a large number of other anchors. I have spoken the Alan Brook about Jockey Hole. He installed Petzl resin anchors in Jockey Hole before the CNCC anchor scheme existed. He became one of the first CNCC anchor installers and installed several DMM anchors in Jockey Hole under the scheme. I have included 2 of these on my topo. This must be the longest time taken to complete a CNCC anchor project.

A small number of installed IC anchors are showing slight movement therefore it has become imperative to test and approve a better resin and much of my efforts are now directed to that task.

There has not been a meeting of the BCA E&T Committee since my last report.

**Simon Wilson – BCA E&T rep and CNCC Anchor Coordinator**

### **Meet's Secretary Reports**

No matters to report for any area.

## CNCC/BCA Representative's Report

I attended the BCA council meeting on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October. Our own chair, Andrew Hinde, as C&A Officer, was also in attendance as were a few other cavers who could be said to come from 'up north'. The BCA is, at last, showing signs of the green shoots of modernisation and reform and it would be great if more cavers from our region would get involved with BCA.

First some rather sad news as Nick Williams resigned from all BCA duties the day before the meeting citing various health issues. Nick has been a pillar of BCA for many years and always a very sensible and moderate voice in my opinion. Given the circumstances, resigning was absolutely the right thing for Nick to do but his involvement will be much missed.

Also resigning due to ill health was the BCA admin assistant, Claire Peachey. Unfortunately Claire had been unwell since the AGM and the ramification of this is that the AGM minutes had not been drawn up. Those that had appeared were not thought to be complete and more work would be needed if they were to be approved by the next AGM. The significance of this is that many decisions were properly made at the AGM and it is important for those involved and for those who wish to understand the results to have the confidence that the minutes are a full reflection of the meeting. There was some discussion over whether the minutes should only record the decision-making process and none of the discussion which led to those decisions.

I hope you are all still with me. Other points of note were;

The next BCA meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January will be at the premises of Spanset Ltd in Cheshire. Council approved this move as it is part of the proposal to demonstrate video conference participation at meetings. It will be a one-off location so never a better opportunity to attend a BCA meeting than one so close to home.

The paper on electronic voting at AGMs was deferred to the next meeting as it was not time critical. Les Williams, BCA chair, stated his intention to get the standing committees working properly so that matters are decided in these committees and council rubber stamps them and doesn't just continue the debate.

A new BCA Secretary is clearly needed. The admin assistant will not be replaced until a new Secretary is appointed. It may be worth discussing who that person should or shouldn't be.

The problems with access for under 18's to the Charterhouse caves on Mendip revolves around some extreme interpretation of Human Rights law. Further action on a paper by Will Burns requires the opinion of a barrister. This has been held-up, but Will Burns is keen to drive this forward. We don't appear to have these problems in our area but it is worth keeping an eye open.

BCA membership numbers were reported as 724 DIMs, 5321 CIMs and 175 groups. A request for feedback on a Diversity Policy put forward by Louise Baddeley was made. An electronic copy has been uploaded to the CNCC website meetings page as a supplement to this report.

Some very good news is that Howard Jones has agreed to become assistant BCA treasurer with a view to taking over fully in 2019. In my opinion, Howard would be a great asset to the BCA and I only

hope he knows what he is taking on. Those of you who know Howard should give him every encouragement. Howard has also accepted the role of BCA insurance manager.

The Treasurer confirmed that there is a very comfortable amount in the reserve fund on 'peanuts' of an interest rate. I have no hesitation on pushing for spending – in the member's interest of course.

The QMC training database issue has rumbled on unresolved for nearly a decade. It now looks like there is light at the end of the tunnel with a company called Go Membership. Hurrah!

Robin Weare asked for, pretty much, a blank cheque to cover the landowner share of the costs to concrete in the Twll Du entrance to Ogof Draenen. I and others spoke against this precedent and in the end his proposal did not even receive a second. The whole Draenen business is ugly and unfortunate and I hope we will never have to deal with this rotten matter in our area. It demonstrates the importance, amongst other things, of maintaining good relations with the authorities.

There was some uncertainty of how the BCA finance committee was actually set up. It was established at this meeting that it was a working group and that it should consult where necessary with other representatives other than just the treasurers of each region. The CNCC proposals on regional funding will go to this group for further recommendations. A very generous time line, until the April 2019 meeting, was given for them to report. This was seen as dragging it out somewhat by some especially as the DCA rep stated they had already put it before their own committee and were fully behind the CNCC. A similar comment was given by the CCC rep. I shall aim to push this forward with the finance committee and take an active role in the working group on this issue as long as our own treasurer is in agreement.

There are more copies of the Minimal Impact Guidelines available via Andrew.

The CRoW working group convener, David Rose, stated that official figures showed that Brexit had occupied 17 times more parliamentary time than all other issues put together, so it was very difficult to get any attention to the CRoW campaign. Never the less the campaign continues to solicit support.

The Equipment and Techniques standing committee had approved the full funding of the IC anchor for CNCC. This should have been a mere rubber stamp for council but there was a mood against it by some based around their unavailability in other areas. I spoke to explain the history and manufacturing issues around this and pointed out that these anchors, as located in caves, were available to members from all regions. It was approved but not unanimous by any means. I found it quite incredible that expenditure such as the £1000 for new locks for caves across Mendip is rubber stamped without even going to council but the IC anchor funding has been held up by over a year to enable it to go through proper channels.

The new P&I Officer, Jane Allen (my wife, so very likely to receive a favourable report) put forward a range of new ideas which were welcomed. They included a new logo, an updated website, new leaflets for beginners, improving circulation of the BCA newsletter, wider media liaison, establishing a P&I committee, improving the BCA reach on Facebook and other social media outlets, review advertising scope, amongst other headlines. In the short term getting on with a 'try caving' leaflet

and new logo was given the budget while the website would be reviewed by the committee. It was interesting for me to note that BCA advertised in Descent magazine to the tune of £3000 per year for six ads (mostly highlighting diseases). Deciding on the message before targeting the right media seemed to be a better way forward.

There will be a new BCA newsletter out soon.

There still seems to be some confusion surrounding the roles of the training committee and QMC but this is gradually getting sorted. It was pointed out that the QMC is still a work in progress. Wider issues surrounding training and other discussions will no doubt come up in our own Training Officer's report.

Youth & Development put forward two issues. Offering free membership to under 18 year olds was accepted. The main reason being to take away one more barrier preventing young people caving. It should be noted that young people can go on three trips before they are required to be a member so one assumes any young person getting free membership will likely be already quite keen. So this should be encouraged. The other proposal was to do away with annual membership cards to reduce plastic, money and time expense. This was not so popular and deferred.

As a standing committee Y&D should have a rep from the CNCC. We are invited to approach them to sort this out.

The vision and constitution reform group had yet to be fully established although some work had been done at Hidden Earth.

The Safeguarding Officer had produced a draft "Safeguarding Guidelines for Clubs". He urgently wanted to hear comments on them and suggested insurance was reliant on them. At least one voice thought some measures were too onerous for clubs. All should make an effort to read them (an electronic copy has been uploaded to the CNCC website meetings page as a supplement to this report). Chris is available if any club reps wish to talk with him.

I hope everyone is still awake but I feel that if I am going to be BCA rep then I should report on all aspects that may be of interest. It also shows that BCA does cover a lot of work. It is up to individuals if they wish to read it but it may be worth CNCC clubs passing on my reports to their own members in order to demonstrate that.

**Tim Allen – CNCC Representative to the BCA**